1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP 13 Mbundu FP 13

for tribute and other exactions of King Konya Cilemo, successor to the stool of Viye, decided to leave his place at Belmonte (Viye) for Benguela,[1] where he remained for ten years. A year later Guilherme Gonçalves left to his sons his flourishing settlement near Kamundongo (Viye), and sailed for Lisbon, intending to stay indefinitely.[2] These two men were the leading traders established in the Highland, but little idea had they that the small trickle of rubber exports begun in 1869 would so soon inaugurate a new era in Central African trade. It was only in 1882 that rubber took even second place in the exports (after bees-wax),[3] but already in 1872[4] its importance was becoming evident, and by 1877 individual Ovimbundu of Viye had already turned over considerable fortunes in the trade.[5] Bastos seems to be correct in taking 1874 as the beginning of this new era in the trade of the region.[6] For the Ovimbundu, the preceding decades, indeed the preceding century or even centuries, had been a period of preparation for the trade which was now beginning. For them the rubber trade, from 1874 until its close in 1916, was the classical period of commercial activity.

The time of preparation had necessarily developed in the Ovimbundu the intellectual acumen, venturesomeness, a technique of co-operation both within their own social groupings and with outsiders, a knowledge of people, places, and things of their Central African world, together with the other qualities which enabled them to carry on their far-flung trading activities. These qualities merit a fuller description (q.v. *infra*, p. 206 f.). During this earlier period, since many of their travels were naturally exploratory, the Ovimbundu probably travelled more widely than during the time of the rubber trade. There were hardly any territories within the bounds of the Congo River, the Lakes, and the Kalahari Desert which they had not penetrated.[7] Some Ovimbundu went even farther afield as employees of European traders or on their own account. A ready example is Domingos Cakahanga and his companions who, in the employ of Silva Porto during the years

[1] *Boletim Soc. Geog. Lisboa, 5a Ser.*, p. 20.
[2] See Cameron, op. cit., p. 400.
[3] *Benguella*, op. cit., 1887, pp. 24 ff.
[4] *Benguella*, op. cit., 1892, p. 29.
[5] Serpa Pinto, op. cit., p. 161 f.
[6] Bastos, op. cit., p. 24.
[7] Serpa Pinto, op. cit., p. 164; L. Magyar, op. cit., pp. 298, 299. The best proof, however, is the fact of the geographical and tribal names found in the Umbundu language.

1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP13 Mbundu FP13

1853–4, crossed Africa from Benguela to the mouth of the Rovuma.[1]

Nor was this the only transcontinental journey effected by Ovimbundu traders.[2] Such long-distance expeditions were not always the most profitable, and certainly the relatively shorter journeys of the time of the rubber trade must have been much more lucrative. Indeed, the judgement of Magyar was that the Ovimbundu generally got more enjoyment and excitement than monetary gain from their expeditions.[3]

Mention has been made that the several Umbundu kingdoms fell in line with the trading activities of Bailundu and Viye. By the beginning of the period of great activity this had eventuated in a loose system of alliances or mutual understandings to the effect that the traders and caravans of each would be tolerated in, and allowed passage through, the territory of the other. At times their 'trade-agreements' seem to have embraced all the Umbundu-speaking peoples, but violations were frequent,[4] and complaints of violations seem to have been almost the regular state of affairs as between Viye and the Ciyaka-Cingolo-Citata group. There also developed regional industrial and commercial specializations. In Magyar's time there was a great metal industry at Ekovongo, the capital of Viye, making hoes for trade with the interior,[5] but by 1875 this work seems to have ceased,[6] for although hoes were still

[1] Cakahanga kept a diary which was edited by Silva Porto and published under the title 'Third Voyage' in the *Boletim Official* of Angola, 1856–7, and later in the *Annaes do Cons. Ultr. Ia Ser.* A summary of this diary appeared in the *Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society* of London, 1860, pp. 136–49, but the translator and editor mistakenly believed that Silva Porto had himself crossed Africa, and added to the confusion by calling the Ovimbundu 'Arabs from Zanzibar'. Silva Porto himself only went as far as Naliele, and it seems that there were 'Arabs' or Swahili in the party, but how far they accompanied it is not clear. That the diary was kept by Cakahanga is evident, for the 'Arabs' could write no language known to Silva Porto.

[2] See Magyar, op. cit., p. 297.

[3] Ibid., p. 299. This referred only to Magyar's time, 1849–57, but I feel it to be a judgement capable of wider extension. Serpa Pinto says that in 1878 he met many who 'turned over capital of a thousand to twelve hundred pounds sterling and some even more; one indeed . . . arrived during my sojourn . . . from the interior where he had traded on his own account to the extent of . . . about £3,500!' (op. cit., p. 161 f.). However, there were also losses and often, so that Magyar's dictum is worth remembering.

[4] e.g. see account of dispute between Ekuikui (Bailundu) and Njambayamina (Viye) in *Missionary Herald*, 1886, pp. 228 f., 452, 508; 1887, p. 463.

[5] L. Magyar, op. cit., p. 297.

[6] See negative testimony of Cameron, of Serpa Pinto, and of early missionaries.

1: Childs M-5 (1924-1940) 1949 FP13 Mbundu FP13

175 439 314 of price fluctuations and sought by every means to maintain the former level of returns. The European traders aided and abetted this process in order to bolster up their credit, for from 1887, when the boom began, most of them were operating on shoe-strings. The result was almost immediate. Benguela rubber was classified as 'third-class' at a price one-fourth the former rate.[1] This was the end of the rubber trade. With the establishment of plantations in the East Indies, in South America, and on the African west coast, which produced a uniformly high quality, the native-produced wild rubber of Angola ceased to have any quotation whatever.[2]

Export statistics show that the totals in quantity and value of rubber exported were nearly as large in 1916 as in 1888, and that [731] in 1918 and 1919 they fell to almost nothing,[3] but for the Ovimbundu the rubber trade ended in 1911—'the year of the great hunger in the Ngangela country'. They remember that many caravans which went out at the beginning of that year's dry season never did return, or that only a few of their stronger members returned—mere skeletons and shadows. *Ngandi*[4] tried to eat wax and died; *Ngandi* killed and ate his younger brother, saying, 'It is better that one of us should live to return, rather than both die.' The caravans usually carried actual rations for only a few days of [484] the outward journey (to last through the 'Hungry Country'), and relied on buying the food needed for the rest of the time. This experience put an end to a trade which was already passing out of the hands of the Ovimbundu—owing to the multiplication of European trading establishments, not only throughout the Umbundu country but even in the 'Ngangela' regions, and the building of the Benguela Railway, which finally put an end to porterage and the trading caravans of former days.[5]

[1] A. Bastos, op. cit., pp. 40 ff.

[2] In 1942, after the capture of Malaya and the Dutch East Indies by the Japanese and the consequent acute shortage of rubber, the gathering of wild rubber in eastern Angola was resumed, most of the product going to Britain. Some, however, has gone to the national factories at Luanda and in Portugal, and consequently there is a stimulus to maintain the production of wild rubber in the colony, but unless more humane methods are used with the native producers the present limited supply is bound to fall off.

[3] Statistics of export and import are given by F. Trancoso, op. cit. The figures for rubber from 1888 to 1919 are on p. 36.

[4] *Ngandi*, the Umbundu equivalent for 'John Doe' or 'So-and-so'.

[5] The Benguela Railway (*Caminho de Ferro de Benguela*) began construction in 1904; in 1910 it reached Cuma (198 miles) in Ciyaka, well up on the Plateau

known throughout the territory bounded by the Congo river, the Great Lakes, and the Kalahari desert. Most other Ovimbundu kingdoms fell into line with the trading activities of Bailundu and Viye. By the middle of the century this had resulted in a loose system of alliances and mutual understandings to the effect that the traders and caravans of each kingdom would be permitted to enter or travel through the others. At time these "trade-agreements" seem to have embraced all the Umbundu-speaking peoples, but violations were frequent, especially between Viye and the Ciyaka-Cingola-Citata group. Trade-agreements were also made beyond the Umbundu-speaking area, e.g. with the Mwata Yamvo of the Lunda.(1)

From roughly the turn of the twentieth century the large-scale trading activities of the Ovimbundu declined. Military occupation of Viye and Bailundu took place in 1890, and from that date European traders began to settle in Viye and Bailundu in ever-increasing numbers. In 1902 the Bailundu war occurred, after which the occupation of the whole of Umbundu country was quickly completed. This campaign paralysed trade, which was already suffering because of a great fall in rubber prices. Other factors which hastened the decline of Ovimbundu trading activities(2) include the famine in Ngangela country in 1911, the disappearance of illicit slave-traffic, and, finally, the building of the Benguella Railway (commenced in 1904), which put an end to the porterage and trading caravans of former days.(3)

LANGUAGE

"Umbundu is usually(4) associated with Ambo, Herero and kindred languages. It would however seem that more comparative study is required to show how real this apparent relationship is: it appears to be especially based on the fact that Umbundu uses prefixial o- with many of its noun classes. In general structure, however, Umbundu shows remarkable similarity in grammar and vocabulary to Luena, Luchazi and other languages of the Ganguella [Ngangela] group.

Features of Umbundu which are worthy of note are:-

i. Presence of nasal vowels before and after 'l', 'h', 'v' and 'w'.

ii. In certain nasal compounds, subtraction occurs, involving the second consonant, but not the nasal, e.g. *muntu* is realised as *omnu*.

iii. Compared with the Lunda-Luena languages Umbundu exhibits an unusually large number of defective verbs.

iv. A vowel system of five vowels.

(1) These were at first one-way agreements, allowing Ovimbundu to trade in many lands, since it was to the advantage of the rulers of these countries. The Ovimbundu are said in fact to have discouraged the tribes to the east from venturing out on their own account. See Livingstone 1857, p.384, Cameron 1877, p.406.
(2) For much greater detail concerning the rise and fall of Ovimbundu trade see Childs op.cit., pp.191-215.
(3) Ibid.
(4) Duke 1945, p.101; Guthrie 1948, p.64; Childs 1949, p.8.

Mat-making

462 285 [412] The making of mats is a specialised craft for men. Generally elderly men are the mat-makers. Two tools are used, a borer and a needle, both products of the blacksmith's forge. Hambly(1) describes the making of reed sleeping mats, large mats used for partitions, and string bags. There are four distinct types of mats, each of which has its specialist.(2)

Leather-work

282 Leather pouches worn on a broad leather belt are part of the essential equipment of the hunter. The pouch is square, rectangular, or semi-cylindrical in shape, and may be decorated with cross-shaped patterns, or brass-headed nails used for decorative effect. Hide is also used for the seats of four-legged wooden stools. Hides are crudely dressed: they are soaked, the inner surface rubbed with ashes, the hair scraped away, and the hide pegged out.(3)

Wood-carving

323 [463] Wood-carving, which is men's work, includes the following specialisations: doors, windows and their frames; coffins; beds, tables and chairs; mortars, pestles, grinding-handles, and handles for various iron implements; stools, household utensils, carved images etc., drums and other musical instruments; canoes (dug-outs and coracles).(4) Illustrations are given by Hambly.(5)

TRADE

438 484 791 [482] Caravan trade is now confined to short journeys when corn, beans and beeswax are carried by men and women porters to the traders' stores. Formerly however it was an important feature of tribal life. Each caravan had its professional leader, and was accompanied by a diviner or medicine-man. Before a caravan started out, a ceremony was performed at which the principal performers were the village headman and the medicine-man. The head of the former headman was brought from its box, sewn in oxhide; blood from a sacrificed animal was sprinkled on the head, and invocation was made to the deceased by the village headman, asking for good fortune for the journey.(6)

438 436 Today the Ovimbundu exchange products among themselves both by barter and the use of Portuguese money,(7) but there are no large markets except in the towns.

[439] 438 The "trade-agreements" between the Ovimbundu kingdoms and between the Ovimbundu and other tribes have been mentioned above.(8) Accompanying these, regional industrial and commercial specialisations within Ovimbundu country developed. Thus in the middle of the last century

(1) Hambly, op.cit., pp.169-70.
(2) Childs, 1949, p.109.
(3) Hambly, op.cit., p.176.
(4) Childs, op.cit., p.110.
(5) Op.cit., Plates XIII to XXII.
(6) Hambly, op.cit., p.156.
(7) For details of Ovimbundu units of measurement see Hambly, op.cit., p.157.
(8) p.9.

131 The coastal strip
484 was at times traversed by the Ovimbundu who know of the sea and call it *kalunga*. Bihéan caravans crossed to the coast with slaves, as history shows, but the nature of the coastal strip marks it as a western barrier limiting the expansion of the Ovimbundu in that direction. The coast line itself is of the greatest moment in the consideration of historical factors. From Loanda, Benguela, and [177] Mossamedes on the coast, the Portuguese penetrated the interior, so making contacts with the Ovimbundu to the encouragement of caravan trade. The importance of this European contact will be seen in subsequent chapters.

The south and southwest parts of Angola are of particular importance in studying the contacts of the Ovimbundu, but to give here the details of the wealthy cattle-keeping culture of these regions, which were accessible through peaceful proximity, trade, and occasional raiding, would be an anticipation of chapter X, "Culture Contacts." [723] One topographical point is of primary importance; namely, the ease with which the Ovimbundu could descend from their strongholds to the low-lying land of the west and south, whereas the reverse journey is much more difficult for a people unaccustomed to manoeuvring and finding their way among hills.

101 Having described the northern, central, western, and southern areas, there remains only the eastern section to consider; this presents several features of peculiar geographical and ethnological interest. [133] The eastern section of Angola is either slightly undulating or flat, the general characteristic is dryness, and vegetation is somewhat [136] sparse though sufficient to shelter many kinds of antelope.

The major population is the Vachokue, a warlike, hunting people, who follow agricultural pursuits but slightly, and do not keep cattle. Examination of the literature describing early exploration indicates [726] the truculent nature of these eastern people with whom caravans of Ovimbundu were in frequent conflict. Umbundu caravans crossed this country when making their way to Rhodesia, culture contacts with which are discussed in chapter X.

The results of contact of Ovimbundu and Vachokue tribes, so far as physical miscegenation is concerned, are mentioned in chapter "Physical Appearance"; while the social effects of slavery resulting from hostilities are described in chapter VI, "Social Life."

174 Rhodesia is a cattle-raising country, but the hostility of the
231 Vachokue, the great distance from central Angola to Rhodesia, and the general dryness of the country to be crossed, discourage the idea that the Ovimbundu obtained their cattle from Rhodesia. If it is

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

235 guese for a long period. The chicken is highly esteemed as a sacrificial
[242] animal, but it could not be said that the flesh is in common use. This failure to develop and utilize to the full, again raises the point of social custom and economic habit. Chickens are cared for, as may be seen in the way they are cooped at night. Sometimes a hen may be seen sitting on her clutch of eggs in a dark corner of a hut, unmolested by people and dogs; yet it is certain that there is no concentration on the rearing of poultry.

Eggs are laid, and chickens are hatched throughout the year, except in the months of November and December when corn supplies
[252] are at their lowest ebb. Eggs are boiled, or fried on a fragment of
[264] pottery, but they are not sucked.

231 The domestic cat is not raised by the Ovimbundu. Wild cats are common, but there is no evidence of their domestication. Small birds and monkeys are sometimes kept as pets.

TRADE AND TRANSPORT

438 Caravan trade, which was at one time an important factor of tribal life, is now confined to short journeys for transporting corn, beans, and beeswax to traders' stores. But in spite of present-day
439 decline of transportation the memory of more prosperous times still exists.

Names of distant places survive in the Umbundu language; thus Tanganyika is called Nakandundu, while the name for far eastern Angola is Muacimbundu, the name of a one-time important chief. The Umbundu language is understood in all parts of Angola, far away from typical Umbundu centers of culture.

484 In the old days there were professional leaders of caravans, and a
788 ceremony was conducted before starting. The medicine-man and the
778 village chief were the principal performers in a rite which consisted
787 of bringing from its box the head of a former chief, sewn in oxhide. An animal was sacrificed so that the blood could be used for sprinkling on the chief's head, and on some occasions of this kind the head was sewn up in a new piece of oxhide. Direct appeal was made to the preserved head by the reigning chief, who asked for good fortune on the journey.

The medicine-man who accompanied a caravan carried with him a female wooden figure decorated with feathers (Plate XXI, Fig. 5). When a branching of the paths gave rise to doubts concerning the correct way the wooden figure was consulted by the medicine-man.

3: Hambly E-5 (1929-1930) 1934 FP13 Mbundu FP13

straight lines. The legs show the usual flexion of the knees and a shortening which is out of proportion to the body length. The lower limbs of most Angolan figures have these characteristics. The body of this figure is hollow and the head detachable. The incised headdress is imitative of the coiffure of Vachokue women. 532

Cangamba, a village in eastern Angola, is a confluence of tribal elements, namely, Vambuella, Luchazi, Babunda, and Vachokue, whose physical appearance, hairdressing, tooth mutilation, and tribal marks differ considerably. The man who sold the figurine brought it furtively. He was an Ocimbundu, but the work is of Chokue origin. The figure, I am informed, was filled with medicine, then placed near a patient who was undergoing curative treatment. 171 [755]

The figurine (*ngevi*) of a woman having a number of dark feathers attached to her back has only one use. A caravan setting out for a long journey is accompanied by a medicine-man whose outfit includes such a figurine. Should the caravan leader be in doubt when choosing between two paths, the medicine-man sets up the image at the parting of the ways. He kneels before it and asks questions, then plugs his nostrils in order to make replies in a falsetto voice supposed to come from the figurine. Thus advised respecting the route to follow, the caravan continues its journey (Plate XXI, Fig. 5; p. 156). 484 778 787

The wooden figure (Plate XXI, Fig. 3) is of exceptional interest because of its connection with the blacksmith's craft, which is associated with introductory rites for apprentices. In former days a newly initiated blacksmith was expected to disappear for a period during which he killed a man. On returning to the work of his forge the blacksmith made a wooden figure of which this example, one of five obtained, is typical. The spirit of the murdered man took up its abode in the effigy and in this way helped with the work. The figure, which is of the usual dimensions, namely, 36 cm high, has the greater part of its surface covered with reddened earth (pp. 159–160). 326 775

Two figurines (Plate XXI, Figs. 1, 6) were obtained from women of the Vachokue tribe in the village of Ngongo, Ngalangi. Here the Vachokue and the Ovimbundu mingle to such an extent that customs are no doubt transferred from one culture to the other. These wooden images are used by childless women, or by women whose infants have died. The woman who sold these figures pressed them to her breasts to show the manner of use. People standing around smiled and nodded their approval. A wooden figure of this kind is substituted for a dead twin. 171 842 [845]

534 Another musical bow named *ekolowa* is of simple construction, consisting of a strip of cane from 54 to 70 cm long and 2 cm wide. At each end of the cane is a projection. A string, when tightly stretched between these projections, pulls the cane into the form of a bow. The performer, placing one end of the bow in his mouth, plucks the string with his thumb and forefinger (Plate XXII, Fig. 7).

Two rubbing instruments are used by the Ovimbundu. *Ogolanda* is a large gourd with a slit in the top along which there is a board cut into sixteen notches. The rubbing of a short stick along these notches produces a sound which is greatly amplified by the gourd resonator. The second instrument of this type is in the form of a wooden bow having its thickest part notched for rubbing with a stick (Plate XXII, Figs. 3, 8).

533 Only specialists are skilled in composing songs, and both men and women are composers. The younger people sometimes go to the old people to learn songs which were popular a generation ago. There are no professional itinerant story-tellers.

There is a chant for funerals which has been quoted in the appropriate section, but no special wedding songs are used. The Ovimbundu have satirical songs humorously describing individual [626] foibles and peculiarities, and as usual in Negro communities a satirical song is feared by thieves, adulterers, or other offenders.

[726] In former days when men were on the warpath they sang, *Okaimbo ketu katito eteke tu lisanumbula tu tandako.* ("Our village is little today, we attack, we extend.") Another war song is *Ocisonde ci likoka ove o kasi vonjila tumdamo.* ("Red ant that creeps along, you who are in the way, get out.")

[484] When men on the march came to a camping ground occupied by another caravan, they sang as a challenge, *Cinene nye? Cinene onjamba kakuli okachama kavela ukuavo.* ("What is the largest? There is no animal largest. The largest is the elephant.")

During hauling and carrying, men sing, *Yende, yende chale, ocimboto lomala vaco.* ("Let it go, let it go, the crab, the frog, with its children.")

482 Lifting loads is always accompanied by noises which suggest that someone is injured. Part of the men make deep grunts to which their companions answer with prolonged groans.

INITIATION

867 Evidence bearing on initiatory rites in Angola shows that the 881 ceremonies are arranged as a process of incorporation into the

6:Edwards E-5 (1955-1956)1962
FP13 Mbundu FP13

[1874-1912]

THE OLD SOCIETY

The trade was conducted in caravans composed of up to several thousand people,[48] under the leadership of *entrepeneurs* called *olofumbelo* (of which the singular is *ofumbelo*). Of such were the individuals whom Serpa Pinto describes as earning wealth equivalent to a thousand pounds or more. Their role was to get together the caravans, to negotiate with the local political authorities, and to provide ritual leadership. The exact relationship between the *ofumbelo* and the ordinary members of the caravan is difficult to see. European travellers found that porters were content with low wages since they had opportunities for private trade, but apparently the caravan organizers had better opportunities for getting rich than had ordinary Ovimbundu. My informants stated that a man organized a caravan to gain wealth. A man who was in a position of prosperity would be known as an *ohwase* (rich man), would stay at home and be expected to assist his relatives.[49]

Different ages and both sexes participated in the trade. Childs says that boys from the age of nine upwards travelled on the caravans, and this is confirmed by Serpa Pinto.[50] Tucker, and my informants however, give the age when caravan travel began as being fifteen or over.[51] Unmarried girls travelled too, but simply acted as helpers to some male relative. The caravan organizers (*olofumbelo*) were old men, I was told, and travelled in the rear while in front of the caravan marched a young man (called the *kesongo*) who carried a flag.[52]

Dr. Childs states that between 1874 and 1886 rubber was gathered from the forests of the interior and took eight months (four months each way presumably) for the Ovimbundu to obtain. From 1886, however, 'red rubber' was obtained from the sandy lands beyond the Cuanza, a journey which only took three months altogether. Hence, Childs states, the trading

[48] A Bastos, *Monografia de Catumbella*, in *Bol. Soc. Geog. Lisboa* 1910 (p. 151) states that caravans of several thousand were used in the 1870s but that by the time of writing (1908–9, nearly the end of the trade) people came in small parties. My informants who would remember this period spoke of the large size of the caravans.

[49] My informants.

[50] Serpa Pinto, p. 164.

[51] J. T. Tucker in *Africa* (Notes and News), April 1956.

[52] Informants.

6:Edwards E-5 (1955-1956)1962
FP13 Mbundu FP13

journeys diminished in distance as they increased in profitability.[53]

My informants, however, gave a somewhat different picture. Long trading journeys were still being undertaken in the last decade of the trade (1901–11). Some men whom I met had travelled to the kingdom of the Mwata Yamvo and beyond to Luba country; one man had made a journey into what is now the Congo Republic which took a year to go and a year to return; another had visited Barotseland. It should be said that these seem to have been unusually long journeys; journeys totalling six to eight months were common.[54]

The significance of the trade in social life is reflected in the mystical explanations of success in business found in Umbundu religion. Prosperity might be explained either by the favour of spirits such as Kandundu and Otjipuku, who received at their shrines libations of wine, or by malevolent sorcery involving the sacrifice of relatives in exchange for wealth.[55] The existence of these two explanations probably reflects the existence of some rich men who satisfied the expectations of their relatives and others who did not.

Apart from the rubber trade, the older slave trade continued until its vigorous suppression in the period 1910–12, and indeed seems, as regards the Ovimbundu, to have become intensified in the period after 1890. The slaves went to S. Tome and Principe, or to coastal plantations. Up to that time the Ovimbundu had sold few of their own people, with the exception of criminals or people who had become generally unpopular with their kin. The collapse of the old political system played into the hands of adventurers who unscrupulously exploited the Umbundu custom of debt slavery or conducted raids for this purpose.[56]

It was then the 'trade' which was the common factor in the life of all Ovimbundu, and which was so to speak the factor,

[53] Childs, p. 208.

[54] Informants.

[55] Although some old men still have shrines to the luck-giving spirits it is not possible to see how their cult functioned in the social structure then existing. It is, however, notable that success could be interpreted mystically in two ways by benevolent spirits or by sorcery.

[56] Childs, p. 213. I was told that Gumba had been raided from Bailundo.

6:Edwards E-5 (1955-1956)1962
FP13 Mbundu FP13

Cela, and Cela influences are notable in several ways.[24] In Cassongue Umbundu has relatively recently ousted other speech.[25] Geographically Bimbe generally is rather lower than most of the Highland. Although the railway line and the growth of maize have been influential here, an alternative pull for labour migration is provided by the coffee plantation of Amboim and Seles, and by the coastal towns of Novo Redondo and Porto Amboim.[26] In the days of the caravan trade Novo Redondo was an important trading centre, more important perhaps than Benguela for the people of this area.

Work is sought by Ovimbundu in lands far from their home. There are Ovimbundu at Brazzaville; others have settled permanently in the Congo Republic, or work in Rhodesia; the Johannesburg mines have employed many, and some have gone as far as Natal.[27] In Epalanga, the village where I lived, there were two men who had been to Johannesburg—nor was this very exceptional and I am told that among the people south of the railway it is quite common.

The world picture of the Ovimbundu is vague, except as regards Angola and the neighbouring countries. The existence of Europe (Putu) composed of different nations Portuguese, French, and English is known, and I was several times asked if there were black people in England. Little or nothing is known of the other continents. The island of S. Tomé in the Atlantic is known, since up to recently Angolan labourers went there, and some convicts are still sent to it. Several people from the neighbourhood had lived in Luanda or worked on coffee plantations in northern Angola. The Belgian Congo was known as Bula Matadi, though people seem little aware of Rhodesia, and Mozambique (Portuguese East Africa) is confused with the southern Angolan port of Moçamedes. The railway lines and the cities along it are of course well known, and some of the people I knew had travelled to Kwanyama country in the far south of Angola to buy cattle. Johannesburg (Zhwaini) and its

[24] Notably in the arm ornaments and hair styles favoured by some women. Cela diviners are often consulted.

[25] Childs (p. 179) suggests that the change came about in the nineteenth century.

[26] For this area of Angola see Egerton, pp. 186–8. Galvão and Selvagem, pp. 378–80, 487–8.

[27] Personal information. Also Childs, p. 815.

6:Edwards E-5 (1955-1956)1962
FP13 Mbundu FP13

preceded by singing, and dancing. There are a certain number of 'school' songs as distinct from hymns, which are semi- or non-religious in nature, which are taught by the catechist and are sung on these occasions with other Umbundu traditional songs. There seems to be little compoition of songs by present day Ovimbundu nor do they know popular Portuguese songs.

The school itself, the centre of these activities, is generally built of adobe bricks in the shape of a church. In any village where there is a fair number of school people it will be the largest building in the village and even in villages of mixed Christian and pagan population the school building tends to be in the centre of the village, a topographical reflection of the social significance of the catechist and the catechetical school. In the school men and women are separated, men on the right, women on the left, a custom also found in some Angolan parish churches.

The catechist's presence is a mark of the identity of the village. The catechetical school is the only institution which groups people of different domestic groups on a village-wide basis, and in which people participate in a wider set of social relations on a village and not on an individual basis, as people are linked to kinsmen, or to the post or to an employer. One can and does associate oneself with a village if one does not belong geographically to it but simply attends its school. Thus Fernando considered himself as belonging to the village of Ngolo Catolica whose catechetical school he attended, although his house was well away from the main village, being much nearer the Protestant village of Vila Graça, where indeed he had kinsmen. When I asked a woman where she lived she replied by giving the name of the vilage catechist. The only occasions on which a group of peope represent one village *vis-à-vis* another are in connection with the travels of missionaries, and in the wedding feasts, which will be described in another chapter.

A missionary on leaving one village for another has his luggage carried by the school people of the village where he has been staying, who will march singng, with perhaps a boy banging on a drum. When they get to the next village they will be greeted at the entrance into the village by the catechist and

6:Edwards E-5 (1955-1956)1962
FP13 Mbundu FP13

his people, who will be neatly dressed and lined up. The welcoming catechist will deliver a speech in Portuguese, and will conclude with three Vivas one, say, for the Bishop of Nova Lisboa, one for the Mission, and one for the visiting priest. These may be varied—I have heard a Viva for Diogo Cão, the Portuguese navigator who discovered Angola. This formal welcome to a procession seems copied from the welcome given to the party from the bride's village when they arrive at the bridegroom's village; and this welcome has in turn copied elements—speeches in Portuguese and calls for Vivas—from the reception of missionaries. Then both parties singing and dancing will proceed to the house where the priest is to stay. The people of the welcoming village should have taken over his luggage at the point where they met his party—if they have not, his carriers will complain vigorously.

It is the catechist's responsibility to get his people to provide the customary gifts of a chicken or two, and possibly eggs and bananas to the visiting priest. He must explain the spiritual state of the school people to the missionary, notably telling him if any of the Christians have married according to pagan custom. It is to him that the priest will direct criticisms on the state of the school building or on the lack of catechetical knowledge of the people. The catechist has also the obligation to visit the mission occasionally during the year—how often depends on nearness, on circumstances and on his own enthusiasm. The most popular times for visiting the mission are Christmastime, the New Year, Easter, and Corpus Christi, when the catechist may go with a number of the school people, though individual Christians also go alone. A catechist will also visit the mission when he has some catechumens who are sufficiently advanced to be tested on their religious knowledge. He has also a general responsibility to report to the mission the activities of diviners, or Christians who have married polygamously. He may also be responsible for referring other disputes to the mission, or for obtaining a letter of commendation to the post in some dispute.

The catechist, then, does not have much authority of his own; his personal role is that of a teacher and leader of prayers. He can, however, invoke the authority of the mission, which